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SITUATION ROOM

MESSAGE NO. 047 CLASSIFICATION UNCLAS PAGES 12

FROM

(NAME)

STAT
1111 S17 1111
(ROOM NUMBER)

MESSAGE DESCRIPTION

DONALD SON / POSNER

TO (AGENCY)

DELIVER TO:

DEPT/ROOM NO.

EXTENSION

CIA

GEORGE LAUDER

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• DONALDSON/POSNER - Page One.

MR. POSNER: Mr. Donaldson, we understand that you can't be a government spokesman, and that you cannot officially speak for the United States government. However, as the ABC White House correspondent, you are certainly very knowledgeable, and we would appreciate it if you could explain to us, that is, to say to the Soviet audience, the U.S. position on the Soviet, repeatedly, made offer to join in a, what would become a comprehensive test (ban?).

You know the Soviet Union announced its unilateral moratorium on August 6th, 1985, (unintelligible) --being in the statement that was made by the General Secretary on the 18th of August, and each time there's been no.

Explain that to us.

MR. DONALDSON: Well, U.S. officials, Mr. Posner, have said repeatedly that the United States must continue testing at the moment because, they believe, the Soviet Union has completed a round of tests to modernize your weapons. We have not completed our tests, to modernize our weapons, and if we were to stop testing now, we would be at a distinct disadvantage.

Further, U.S. officials says that measures for confirmation, that is, verification that a test ban was

DONALDSON/POSNER - Page two.

being observed by both sides have not been agreed to. We want, as you know, on site inspection. We want other provisions which would guarantee that neither side would violate a treaty, if we arrived at one.

So for those two basic reasons, U.S. officials make no bones about it, at the moment they are not interested in a comprehensive test ban treaty.

MR. POSNER: Well, it's interesting that you say that, Mr. Donaldson, because I think it's been repeatedly stated by the General Secretary that the Soviet Union is open to on site inspection, to international inspection, to any kind of inspection. As a matter of fact, right now, we have not far from Kamyslybas (?), which is in Kazakhstan, which is the site of part of the Soviet nuclear testing, we have a group of American scientists who are there with seismographic, sophisticated apparatus verifying whether or not the Soviets are testing.

As a matter of fact, they've been able to test, rather, to record American tests many thousand miles away.

So, on the one hand, it would seem to me that either someone's deaf out there, and not hearing what the Soviets are saying that they are open to any kind of verifica-

- DONALDSON/POSNER - Page three.

tion, including on site--that's number one. And number two, if you look at just this year alone, you find that the United States has conducted eighteen--although it's officially announced fifteen--but three were very low threshold, but nevertheless they were reported. And altogether, for every ten tests that the Soviets have conducted, the U.S. has conducted fourteen--forty percent more.

Now, how can it possibly be, with that kind of a ratio, the Soviets are somehow more modernized, ahead--that's my first question. My second question is if the Soviets repeatedly say we're open to on site testing, why do we get this answer that, as if we're not being heard.

MR. DONALDSON: Well, Mr. Posner, the Soviets have not repeatedly said they are open to on site testing. Yes, you are correct. I understand that General Secretary Gorbachev has now made that statement. But if you go back over the 40 years of arms control and efforts to reach arms control, the Soviet Union has never been open to on site inspection. If that policy is changing, I'm certain that it will help facilitate down the road an agreement, because verification--and that means on site inspections for the most part, is what we're after.

You talk about a team of American scientists who are now in the Soviet Union. I think that's a very positive

- DONALDSON/POSNER - Page four.

development. But it's the first team, and it's the first time. And it's been 40 years since nuclear weapons have been on the face of the earth.

So, if your policy is changing, I can only think-- and you're right, I don't speak for the U.S. government--that this may open the way to an agreement down the line. But I think it's a little disingenuous because a statement has now been made, to try to go back in time, and apply it to the last 40 years.

MR. POSNER: On, no. There's no one one trying to apply anything to the last 40 years. And as a matter of fact, if you look back over those 40 years we'll see many things that both of us don't like.

But, again, and if you look back to January 15th of this year, it's a pretty long period when the General Secretary proposed a three stage way of getting rid of nuclear weapons by the year 2000. He then spoke about on site inspection. He's been saying it many times.

But we get back this answer as if he isn't heard. I mean, you have just acknowledged that you think it's a good thing, and I certainly do. But what I'm wondering is how many times do we have to repeat, put it up on a sign or something,

DONALDSON/POSNER - Page five.

before at least the administration would certainly know, would acknowledge that they've heard that the Soviets have said, and now many times, that they're open to on site inspection, and react to it, instead of saying "until there's some kind of agreement on on site inspection, we cannot talk about the test ban".

This is something we here find very difficult to understand.

MR. DONALDSON: Well, you'll recall at the outset when you asked me the question to the extent that I know what the U.S. position is, what is it, I said that the first requirement was that we needed to continue to modernize our nuclear weapons, to modernize warheads for weapons that are permissible and that both sides are building.

We believe that you have completed a modernization, and therefore can suspend your tests. But we have not completed our modernization. And just as it would be unfair, I suppose, if we asked the Soviet Union to stop modernizing after we had already done it, you'll have to acknowledge that it's unfair if you ask us to stop modernizing to catch up with you when you have already completed your tests.

MR. POSNER: Well, I'd have to say that if

-- DONALDSON/POSNER - Page six.

notwithstanding the fact that the United States has conducted eighteen tests to zero during the past year compared with the Soviet Union, and a total of about 225 more tests in general than the Soviet Union, and still lags behind in its modernization, something is wrong with U.S. technology.

Because otherwise it would be very difficult to understand how this possibly could happen. Let's move on to some other--

MR. DONALDSON: Well, if I may have a point. It may not be U.S. technology; it may be that during the 70's, the United States did not move forward in modernization, for whatever reasons, while the Soviet Union did. We lagged behind. Now, whether this was a political will, whether this was a desire to suspend the arms race--whatever reason you want to subscribe to, it is a fact that during the 70's, under President Brezhnev, the Soviet Union rushed forward with new weapons, new missiles, new warheads, and we did not. Now we're trying to catch up.

MR. POSNER: This was all in the framework of SALT I and SALT II, and this is 1986, after a tremendous American build-up. I think it's very difficult, I repeat, for the people here to understand this whole idea of the United States lagging behind.

- DONALDSON/POSNER - Page seven.

I think it's very convenient sometimes for the United States to say it lags behind and in other cases to say it's far ahead.

But, let's move on to some other areas which I think are also very interesting to the Soviets, and that is one argument that there seems to be a repeated argument, at this point in the United States, that somehow nuclear weapons are much detested for the safety of the United States. But if you don't test the weapons, you're jeopardizing your safety; you're jeopardizing your deterrent. Could you enlarge on that?

MR. DONALDSON: Well, it is correct, I am told, and I'm no nuclear scientist, as you know, Mr. Posner. But it is correct that after a period of time nuclear weapons in the storehouse, on line, but of course, not yet armed, can deteriorate. It is possible. And experts say that they must be tested from time to time to maintain the effective deterrent that we have in in our nuclear stockpile.

But I again must tell you, not being a nuclear expert, I am telling you what I am told rather than what I know.

MR. POSNER: Well, I think (unintelligible) the point in question, but I really believe--I am also not a nuclear expert, and I (can?) look into that. Because being arms that are crucial in the final analysis to our existence.

-- DONALDSON/POSNER - Page eight.

Now, in 1974, both of our countries agreed, without signing an agreement, we came to the conclusion that we would not test nuclear warheads with a yield of over 150 kilotons. We would hold to yields that were no higher than that. And yet you certainly know that the United States has warheads of several megatons power.

MR. DONALDSON: So do you, for that matter.

MR. POSNER: Of course, of course.

Now, the United States has not said that these have to be tested. Why are they saying that only the smaller ones have to be tested. Now, if you don't know the answer to that--

MR. DONALDSON: I don't. I was going to say you have them, Mr. Posner. I don't know why these things are being said, because again, not being a nuclear expert, and not having as my field of reportage nuclear weapons exclusively, or the military establishment exclusively, as you and perhaps you have told your viewers know, I'm a political reporter, I can't answer your question. But I'll bet you there is a good answer.

MR. POSNER: Well, the reason I say this is the other day there was a news conference in Moscow with one of the leading nuclear physicists, a man called Victor Voldan (?),

- DONALDSON/POSNER - Page nine.

who explained in detail, but in a way that any layman could understand, why it is not necessary to do a nuclear test. And of course, we also verify our weapons. We have to know that they're working; but we can do that without testing. So can the Americans.

And I was wondering whether this news conference, which has been reported back to you, as a political journalist, if you would know exactly what the story is. Because we have to know.

MR. DONALDSON: I don't know. You've got the wrong man here, Mr. Posner.

MR. POSNER: I'm sorry. What about this argument? There are some people who say that it's not nuclear tests that worries us; it's the fact that we have nuclear weapons. We should talk about cutting back on nuclear weapons, rather than just a test ban. This has been said also by some official representatives of the U.S. government.

MR. DONALDSON: But we are talking about cutting back on nuclear weapons. That's the whole purpose of the latest round of Geneva negotiations, on what we call START, strategic arms limitation. The President, Mr. Reagan, wants very much to cut back. As a matter of fact, his goal is to cut back to zero also. But it has to be in a mutually desired, verifiable

DONALDSON/POSNER - Page ten.

step, so that both sides, as they reduce, reduce in kind. And by in kind, I'm talking about the comprehensive kinds of nuclear weapons and technology, launching vehicles and platforms that we both possess.

MR. POSNER: There's no doubt about that. We have to keep in mind (?) security, it has to be equal security. We have to think about your security, your interests, and you have to think about ours.

But, my point is this: Don't you think that a comprehensive nuclear test ban would be an extremely important step along the--provided, of course, that there is verification, on site and other, so that there can be no cheating on either side. Don't you think this would be a major step, making it possible to go on to the crucially important issue of cutting back on nuclear weapons?

MR. DONALDSON: A comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty that is verifiable would in fact be a positive and important step, once both sides--and I emphasize this--have reached a parity, not only in weapons, but in technology. And, and I think this is an important part of that also, as long as both sides have agreed to cut back on nuclear weapons, and cut back on the arms race.

- DONALDSON/POSNER - Page eleven.

As you know, President Reagan is now developing the Strategic Defense Initiative, a space shield, to prevent incoming missiles from being able to strike the United States, and for that matter, he's offered it to the Soviet Union down the line any place on the face of the earth.

Now, if we stop nuclear testing, and were unable to modernize our forces in an offensive way, and we're unable to develop a space shield, then we're at a disadvantage. And if the Soviet Union has completed its modernization program, you have an advantage that's very scary.

MR. POSNER: I believe it could be said that if we both stop testing, we can no longer go ahead, you or I. Your country or my country. And that means that we have to stop. And from there, we go down and now up.

The fact is that today we both have more than enough if we're talking about defense. If we're talking about a new kind of weapon, then we both have to change. That is why I believe that a nuclear test ban is a first major step along the way to stopping this insane arms race that we'll have to go into (?).

Nevertheless, I would thank you very much for participating. Incidentally, you're the first American journalist who's commented on a public station by the Soviet General Secretary. And I want to thank you for having come.

DONALDSON/POSNER - Page Twelve

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MR. DONALDSON: Well, it's been a pleasure,
Mr. Posner. I want to thank you for inviting me. And I want
to thank your viewers for watching.

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